

From Medina to Karbala

🕌 **This theatrical play includes
recitations throughout as part of its storytelling.**

M. A. HOSSEIN

Kisa Publications | Under the Guidance of Moulana Nabi R. Mir (Abidi)

Disclaimer: Religious texts have **not** been translated verbatim so as to meet the developmental and comprehension needs of the audience. Dialogue and scenes in this production are artistic interpretations created to illuminate meaning and emotion, and do not claim to be exact historical quotations from Imām Ḥusayn  or other figures.

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Dedication

This book is dedicated to the beloved Imām of our time عجل الله تعال فرجه الشريف.
May Allah ﷻ hasten his reappearance and help us to become his true companions.

Acknowledgments

Prophet Muḥammad ﷺ said:

“On the Day of Resurrection, the ink of the scholars will be weighed up against the blood of the martyrs, and the ink of the scholars will be heavier than the blood of the martyrs.”

[Pāyāndeh, Abūl Qāsim, *Nahj al-Faṣāḥah*, Saying #3222]

True reward lies with Allah ﷻ, but we would like to sincerely thank
Shaykh Ehsan Ahmadi and Sisters Abeda Khimji, Ayman Jagani,
Rumina Hashmani, and Sabika Mithani.

May Allah ﷻ bless them in this world and the next.

Marḥūmīn Dedication

Please recite a Sūrah al-Fātiḥah for the departed souls (*Marḥūmīn*)
of the Dharamsi, Moloo, and Jaffer Ali families and for *Marḥūma* Roshan Bano Akber Ali.

Transliteration Chart

Arabic terms in this book have been transliterated according to the following guidelines*:

ء	a, i, or u (initial form)	ص	ṣ
ء	'(medial or final form)	ض	ḍ
ا	a	ط	ṭ
ب	b	ظ	ẓ
ت	t	ع	ʿ
ث	th	غ	gh
ج	j	ف	f
ح	ḥ	ق	q
خ	kh	ك	k
د	d	ل	l
ذ	dh	م	m
ر	r	ن	n
ز	z	ه	h
س	s	و	w
ش	sh	ي	y

ـَ	a	آ / ا / ئ	ā
ـِ	i	ي	ī
ـُ	u	و	ū
ـّـ	double letter		

*Please note that due to limitations, the transliteration is not 100% accurate in capturing tajwīd rules.

Symbol Usage

Throughout this work, when taking the name of any of the revered personalities in Islamic history, including Allah ﷻ, Prophet Muḥammad ﷺ, his select family members, and religious scholars, we have employed the following Arabic symbols to show the reverence to each of them. As a part of Islamic culture, readers are requested to send the salutations upon these personalities when they read this work.



All glory belongs to Allah, the Glorified and Exalted

Used exclusively for God (Allah ﷻ)



Mighty and Majestic (is He)

Used exclusively for God (Allah ﷻ)



Blessings of Allah be upon him and his Immaculate Progeny

Used exclusively for Prophet Muḥammad ﷺ



Peace be upon him

Used for one honored male



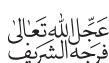
Peace be upon all of them

Used for three or more honored men or women or a combination



Peace be upon her

Used for one honored female



May Allah, the All-High, hasten his noble return

Used exclusively for Imām al-Mahdī ﷺ



May his spirit be sanctified

Used for religious scholars

About the Board ‘Ālim

Moulana Nabi R. Mir (Abidi) is a scholar, an educator, a father, and an enthusiast for creating educational infrastructure and Islamic resources for the benefit of the global community. He is a pioneer of always thinking “outside of the box” by supporting the creation of innovative materials to engage readers of all ages to pick up Islamic books, interact with Qur’ānic games, learn from the Steps to Perfection Curriculum, and begin their life-long journey of holistic education.

Being a dedicated student and graduate of *Darse Khārij* from the *Ḥawzah* (the highest level of Islamic Studies in the Seminary), Moulana Abidi understands the intrinsic value of Islamic education. Also, having grown up in India, and now residing in the United States, he has had the honor of traveling to various communities and meeting many community leaders all over the globe. He values the importance of collaboration and working together to optimize our communal potential, and create open source platforms so that information and resources are available and accessible to everyone around the world.

*You, dear reader, are now part of the Al-Kisa family.
Share the word, and join the mission.*

Foreword

Prophet Muḥammad ﷺ said:

“Train your children on loving me and the love of my Ahlul Bayt and the Qur’ān.”

(Qāḍī Nūrallāh Shustarī, *Iḥqāq al-Ḥaqq*, P. 18.)

Literature is an influential form of media that often shapes the thoughts and views of an entire generation. Therefore, in order to establish an Islamic foundation for the future generations, there is a dire need for compelling Islamic curriculum and literature. Over the past several years, this need has become increasingly prevalent throughout Islamic centers and schools everywhere. Due to the growing dissonance between parents, children, society, and the teachings of Islam and the Ahlul Bayt ﷺ, this need has become even more pressing. Al-Kisa Foundation, along with its subsidiary, Kisa Publications, was conceived in an effort to help bridge this gap with the guidance of righteous scholars (*‘ulamā’*) and the help of educators. We would like to make this a communal effort and platform. Therefore, we sincerely welcome constructive feedback and help in any capacity.

The goal of *From Medina to Karbala* is to illuminate the timeless, transcendent path of Imām Ḥusayn ؑ from Medina to Karbalā’—a journey not of distance, but of destiny. It is a journey that began with the refusal to pledge allegiance to tyranny and culminated in the ultimate sacrifice for truth (*ḥaqq*), justice, and the preservation of the dīn of his grandfather, the Noble Prophet Muḥammad ﷺ.

In every age, we are called to not just remember this journey, but to relive it—emotionally, intellectually, and spiritually. The sacred route of Imām Ḥusayn ؑ was a path of clarity, conviction, and divine purpose. His words ring eternally, as he proclaimed:

“Indeed, I have risen to seek reform in the ummah of my grandfather.”¹

The story of Karbalā’ is not confined to history; it is a living movement that renews our moral compass. *From Medina to Karbala* as a production seeks to awaken that movement within us. Through dialogue, poetry, and evocative performance, it serves as a mirror to our souls—reminding us of who we follow, what we stand for, and where our loyalties lie.

1 Allāmah Majlisī, *Biḥār al-Anwār*, Vol. 44, P. 329.

Poetry and theater allow people to feel and express in ways that other texts cannot. From the time of the Ahlul Bayt ؑ, poetry has been a powerful tool to convey deep emotions and profound messages. The Ahlul Bayt ؑ themselves utilized this art form to reach hearts and minds, connecting people to their innate nature (*fiṭrah*) and the eternal truths they espoused. Through poetry, the profound messages of Imām Ḥusayn ؑ have been preserved and passed down, resonating with believers across generations.

Poetry serves as a bridge, linking us to the realities and messages of Imām Ḥusayn ؑ. The Ahlul Bayt ؑ would often recite poetry and commend poets who used their words to highlight the virtues and struggles of the holy household.

We hope you will benefit from this work, and use it as a means to strengthen the foundations of your faith and community, inshā'Allāh, in order to achieve our true goal in life.

We pray to Allah ؑ to give us the strength and Divine ability (*tawfīq*) to perform our duties and responsibilities, and always turn to Him for all of our needs.

With Du'ās,

Nabi R. Mir (Abidi)

ACT 1

Act 1

(MU'AWIYAH DIES → IMĀM ḤUSAYN ﷺ LEAVES MEDINA)

The stage begins with the palace of the governor of Medina on one side and the Imām's house on the other side.

Act 1, Scene 1

CAST

- **NARRATOR**
- **WALĪD**
- **FRIEND**
- **MESSENGER**
- **GUARD**
- **MARWĀN**

**SETTING: THE PALACE OF THE GOVERNOR OF MEDINA IS LIT.
THE HOUSE OF IMĀM ﷺ IS NOT LIT.**

Walīd ibn 'Utbah and his friend are sitting together laughing and playing chess with an array of foods beside them. A guard stands in the corner near the door. Lights are out.

NARRATOR: The story of Karbalā' is etched in our hearts and souls. But the tragedy began well before the 10th of Muḥarram. Let us journey back, months before blood is shed, to the palace of Walīd ibn 'Utbah, the governor of Medina during the reign of Mu'āwiyah.

(Lights on.)

WALĪD: And the way he ate — can you imagine sitting with him for dinner each night. My friend, it was obscene!

FRIEND: Walīd, I pity his wife! She must wear a blindfold when they eat every day!

WALĪD: Hahaha, with a face like his, she must pray for blindness constantly!

(The men both laugh disgustingly and loudly as they continue to play chess.)

WALĪD: But I won't complain. With Mu'āwiyah sick, and the taxes flowing in, I am living the dream. So what if I have to host lavish dinners for the rich businessmen and dignitaries?

FRIEND: I noticed the orders from Mu'āwiyah have been slow. You have so much time to play and socialize!

WALĪD: Yes, yes. Alḥamdulillāh! I get to enjoy myself with lavish parties. The man is dying at

the pace of a pregnant camel. He has no energy for conquests or fights, and I, for one, am hoping for a long, unhealthy life for him.

FRIEND: Good thing Yazīd is not a religious man, or he would be praying for the death of his father daily. That boy will be a powerful tyrant. I can see it in his eyes.

WALĪD: Young, bloodthirsty, ambitious, and ruthless. He reminds me of Mu‘āwiyah in his prime!

FRIEND: Regardless of what he does, he will be the one holding the strings to our money bags!

WALĪD: There is a price to pay to be the governor of Medina. I have had to work to be the one sitting in this palace. But I figured, so what if I am to sell my soul; it’s worth all of these riches! What’s a little violence in exchange for all these luxuries?!

FRIEND: As long as those luxuries are shared amongst friends, I say—do as you please!

(The men laugh and continue to play chess for a moment. A messenger burst into the room. The men stand up startled.)

WALĪD: What is the meaning of this intrusion! Do you have no decorum? Tell me at once your purpose before I have you seized by the guards!

MESSENGER: *(breathless)* I come with a message directly from Damascus! I was told it was of the utmost importance and must be delivered as soon as possible!

(Walīd takes the letter. His friend stands quietly, unsure of what to do with himself. Walīd opens the letter to read it and immediately sinks into his chair, deflated. He finishes reading the letter, and looks to his friend.)

WALĪD: It is an urgent matter. You must go.

FRIEND: Yes, of course.

(The friend turns to pocket whatever food he can and then leaves. Walīd sits, jittery and anxious, and begins speaking to himself.)

WALĪD: How do I .. what do I .. I .. A plan, a plan, come on, Walīd, think. *(Walīd rests his head in his hands, rubbing his eyes and his temples. He speaks slowly.)* Guard.

GUARD: Yes, sir.

WALĪD: Find Marwān. Bring him to me at once.

(The guard leaves. Walīd stands and begins pacing anxiously. He stops, staring at mundane items, clearly lost in thought, only to begin pacing again. He picks up the letter again, rereading it, his hands shaking slightly. Moments later, the doors open and Marwān enters.)

MARWĀN: I must say, Walīd, I didn't expect this treatment even from the likes of you. To be summoned in this manner to my own former palace—what kind of disrespect is this for a former governor?

WALĪD: Mu'āwiyah is dead.

(Both men silently stare at each other for a moment.)

MARWĀN: *Innā lillāh wa innā ilayhi rāji'ūn.* *(pause)* But ... why have you called me?

WALĪD: I did not know what else to do or who else to call.

(The following lines are recited to the tune of Bassem Karbalā'i's Yisajilny.)



WALĪD: A man just brought me a letter.

(Walīd gives Marwān the letter, and Marwān glances at it quickly.)

Yazīd has sent me an order:

He wants bay'ah¹.

He commands me to call Ḥusayn,
So that he can strengthen his reign.

He wants bay'ah. *(Walīd sits down)*

Do I have the authority
To force Ḥusayn to his knees
For this bay'ah,
For this bay'ah?

MARWĀN: Don't start doubting now, Walīd.

Yazīd's rich—remember your greed.

Just man up and do the deed.

Who cares who is Ḥusayn's father?

Pay his price he'll leave his honor.

Come, we can do it together.

Call him here; he won't make trouble.

The security, we'll double;

We can force him if he struggles.

We'll get bay'ah.

(Marwān sits next to Walīd and puts his hand on Walīd's shoulder)

1 Allegiance.

Think of all the money we'll have;
It won't fit inside our coin bags.
We'll get bay'ah.
Ḥusayn has no choice but to come.
Be firm, and soon it'll be done.
We'll get bay'ah.

WALĪD: Yes, you must be right, Marwān.
I will call Muḥammad's grandson.
Let's get bay'ah.

(Walīd stands up and begins moving to the center of the stage facing the audience. Marwān stays seated in the background but is visible to the audience as he writes a letter with a feather.)

Let's get bay'ah.

(Walīd's voice sounds more and more confident as this stanza is recited.)

I think I can reason with him;
Ḥusayn will want to save his kin.
He'll give bay'ah.
I will approach him with power;
He'll have no choice but to cower.
He'll give bay'ah.
Let me rush to send a summons.
Let us finish this discussion.
Time for bay'ah,
Time for bay'ah.

(Recitation ends. Marwān hands Walīd the note immediately. Walīd reads it quickly and nods.)

WALĪD: Yes, this will do. *(Walīd raises his hand and snaps twice, motioning to the guard in the corner.)*
Guard! *(The guard rushes to Walīd's side.)*

GUARD: Yes, sir.

WALĪD: Deliver this immediately to Ḥusayn. Wait for him to write his reply and bring it to me at once.

GUARD: Yes, sir!

(The guard runs off with the letter. Marwān turns to Walīd.)

MARWĀN: Walīd, you know that when you send word of receiving bay‘ah you must—

WALĪD: Yes, yes, your name will be included. Don’t worry; you will get your share of the riches.

(Marwān nods and smiles.)

MARWĀN: Then you will find no other helper as keen as me. I will stay until it is done.

WALĪD: Let us begin our preparations. If he is to come tonight we have no time to waste.

Act 1, Scene 2

CAST

- **IMĀM ḤUSAYN** 🕌
- **RELATIVE 1**
- **RELATIVE 2**
- **RELATIVE 3**
- **WALĪD**
- **MARWĀN**

SETTING: THE HOUSE IS LIT. THE PALACE IS NOT LIT.

(Imām Ḥusayn 🕌 stands in the house, his young male relatives arrive in small groups, engaging in quiet chatter.)

RELATIVE 1: Do you know why we have been asked to come?

RELATIVE 2: I wasn't told, but with this level of urgency, it must be important.

(Chatter continues amongst the group in low voices until Imām Ḥusayn 🕌 stands in the center ready to address the group.)

IMĀM ḤUSAYN 🕌: My relatives, I have received a message from Walīd. He has summoned me and some others to the palace.

RELATIVE 1: Summoned you with such urgency? What could be the issue?

IMĀM ḤUSAYN 🕌: He has called us to swear the oath of allegiance to Yazīd before the news of Mu'āwiyah's death spreads amongst other people.

(This is clearly big news and the group begins talking between themselves momentarily.)

RELATIVE 3: Tell us what is to be done! Will you go to meet with him? Shall we storm the palace?!

IMĀM ḤUSAYN 🕌: No, we will not be the ones to begin a fight where it hasn't been started. Although, I do not trust Walīd. If you come with me, he will be forced to maintain decorum. Let us leave together at once.

(The group leaves the house, led by Imām Ḥusayn 🕌. Lighting follows them as they walk. Imām walks tall and confident, as do the men behind him, each keeping his hand on his swords and his head held high. When they arrive outside the palace, Imām 🕌 turns to his relatives.)

IMĀM ḤUSAYN 🕌: Gather, gather, and listen to my instructions.



IMĀM ḤUSAYN ﷺ: This is as far as you can come with me
Walīd has only asked to speak with me
Stand by the door and listen quietly
If you hear shouts, come and stop the meeting

(Imām Ḥusayn ﷺ leaves them and knocks on the door as he recites.)

IMĀM ḤUSAYN ﷺ: Yes, by Allah, I know what will happen
I know that this meeting will start my end
The reason my grandfather had cried when
I was first born and he spoke of my death.

(Imām Ḥusayn ﷺ enters the palace where Walīd and Marwān are waiting for him. Walīd stands in front, and Marwān listens from behind.)

WALĪD: Come in, Ḥusayn; I have matters to share
Muʿāwiyah has died and left an heir.
Yazīd will sit on the throne now, beware
You must pledge allegiance right now, right here

(There is an extra pause here as Walīd watches Imām Ḥusayn's reactions with some level of fear.)

IMĀM ḤUSAYN ﷺ: Surely, to Allah we will all return.
As for this oath, I hear your tone is stern.
But, Walīd, you have no need for concern.
I have a plan that I think you'll prefer.
What is the value of my bayʿah here?
No one to see my support or to hear.
Instead, you should ask in the public sphere,
So witnesses can all surround me near.

(Walīd strokes his chin and shifts his feet.)

WALĪD: Hmm, yes, Ḥusayn that's a good idea.
And you can bring with you all your Shīʿah.
Together all will pledge their allegiance.
Tomorrow, we will meet for the bayʿah.

(Marwān jumps forth, flourishing his arms as he shouts.)

MARWĀN: Walīd don't you let him go—that's foolish!
You hold the power; he'll do as you wish.
Demand bay'ah, or we will arrest him.
Better yet, bring your sword and compel him.

(Imām's relatives rush past the guard outside and enter the palace ready to draw their swords.)

IMĀM ḤUSAYN : Oh, son of Zarfā, you speak of killing?
Know, by Allah, you've committed a sin.
I'll take my leave before fights can begin.
You will have to wait until the morning.

(Recitation ends. Imām Ḥusayn  and his group leave. The actors in the palace return to speaking instead of reciting.)

WALĪD: You angered him when he had already agreed to the allegiance!

MARWĀN: *(speaking slowly)* If you think that man is going to give Yazīd his bay'ah, you are more ignorant than I assumed.

WALĪD: Don't forget, you are speaking to a governor!

MARWĀN: And will you be the governor if you fail to obtain Ḥusayn's oath to Yazīd? Enjoy the riches tonight because tomorrow will be a challenge.

WALĪD: We will meet with him, and it will be done in public, just as he said.

MARWĀN: *(speaking sarcastically)* Yes, yes, leave your sword at home—it will be like old friends meeting. Get yourself together, Walīd! Ḥusayn will not go down without resistance! These Hāshimites never do!

Act 1, Scene 3

CAST

- **IMĀM ḤUSAYN** 🕌
- **NARRATOR**
- **FĀṬIMAH**
- **SAYYIDAH ZAYNAB**
- **UMM LAYLĀ**
- **FATIMA ŞUGHRAH**
- **ḤAḌRAT ‘ABBĀS**

SETTING: THE HOUSE IS LIT. THE PALACE IS NOT LIT.

(The house is full of women, children, and men. All of them seem to be packing or cleaning.)

NARRATOR: After the conversation at Walīd’s palace, Imām Ḥusayn 🕌 had two nights to pack and ensure his family was ready to leave for Mecca. We join Sayyidah Zaynab and the family of the Imām 🕌 as they finish preparing for their journey.

(Sayyidah Zaynab is packing something as Fāṭimah watches.)

FĀṬIMAH: But Aunt, I’m finished with all of my packing and I have nothing more to do. Please, please, will you play with me?

SAYYIDAH ZAYNAB: My darling neice Fāṭimah, you know that I love to play with you but we have so much more to prepare! Your bags might be packed but what about all of the food and supplies. How about you go check on Alī ‘Asghar? I heard him giggling earlier, maybe you can play with him?

(Fāṭimah Şughrah nods quietly to Sayyidah Zaynab.)

SAYYIDAH ZAYNAB: You know, I think even ‘Alī Akbar might be finished helping your father pack— perhaps he could take a break and give you a ride on his shoulders?

(Fāṭimah Şughrah smiles happily.)

FATIMAH ŞUGHRAH: Okaaaay, I’ll go play with them until we have to go.

(Fāṭimah Şughrah runs off. Umm Laylā approaches Sayyidah Zaynab.)

UMM LAYLĀ: We have finished packing all of the provisions. I just wish we’d had more time to prepare, so we could cook food that would sustain us longer.

SAYYIDAH ZAYNAB: Umm Laylā, māshā’Allāh that’s a huge task you have finished. Do not worry, our Imām has given us a command—ar-Razzāq will provide for us. You know, the

journey will pass faster than we expect and once we reach Mecca, the markets will have plenty of food for the group.

UMM LAYLĀ: Yes, that's true. I just feel uneasy about leaving in such a rush, especially in the night.

(Sayyidah Zaynab stops her packing and sits with Umm Laylā - holding her hands and reassuring her)

SAYYIDAH ZAYNAB: Of course, I understand how you feel. You know, I remember hearing the stories of the time my grandfather Rasūlullāh had to leave Mecca in the darkness of night. Rasūlullāh knew that in order to protect the Ummah he had to preserve his life and migrate to Medina. He wasn't simply leaving in the night for a trip. He was shifting his entire life to a new city. But he knew that this was the path forward for Islam. Even my father Imām 'Alī  didn't worry when he was sleeping in Rasūlullāh's bed that night waiting for the attackers. *(pause)* All this to say that Allah  has chosen this for us. And if our Imām says that in order to revive the Ummah we must leave tonight, then we leave tonight without fear, knowing that we are leaving for the sake of Allah .

UMM LAYLĀ: *(looks a bit calmer)* For the sake of Allah . *(nods)* Yes of course, I know you are right. My Imām has been given knowledge that I don't have and this is Allah's will. I just wish I could calm my heart down completely.

(Sayyidah Zaynab squeezes Umm Laylā's hands, and together they recite dhikr of Allah  and by calling Yā 'Alī)

SAYYIDAH ZAYNAB: Shall I call your son? I know just the sight of him will calm your heart.

UMM LAYLĀ: *(Smiling as she speaks)* You know me too well. I saw Fāṭimah run off to his room, but perhaps I'll peek in and watch them play.

(Lighting/attention shifts to the other side of the home where Imām Ḥusayn  and Ḥaḍrat 'Abbās are.)

ḤAḌRAT 'ABBĀS: My *Mawlā*, the camels and horses are fed and resting. Their saddles are clean, and their reins are attached. I spoke with our sister, and everything is ready for the women and children to travel tomorrow. Tell me, what else can I do to serve you?

IMĀM ḤUSAYN : The darkness of the night has settled, and we must leave soon. But, 'Abbās, I cannot leave Medina without bidding farewell to my beloved grandfather, brother, and mother. I must go visit them.

ḤAḌRAT 'ABBĀS: Of course, my *Mawlā*.

IMĀM ḤUSAYN : Stay with the family and ensure their needs are fulfilled. Let them know we will be leaving soon and help them with their preparations. When I return from the graveyard, we will depart for Mecca inshā'Allāh.

ḤAḌRAT ‘ABBĀS: Of course, my *Mawlā*. We will be ready for you when you return, inshā’Allāh.

Lights go out and a spotlight follows Imām Ḥusayn ﷺ approaching the grave of Sayyidah Fāṭimah ﷺ.

IMĀM ḤUSAYN ﷺ: So many farewells in just one night. And this final farewell is so difficult to complete. But I know that I am returning to my Lord, well pleased with Him and well-pleasing to Him..

(He sits crying beside her grave.)

(The following dialogue is recited to the tune of Tasbīḥāte Ḥaḍrate Zahrā’ by Haj Mahdi Rasoli.)



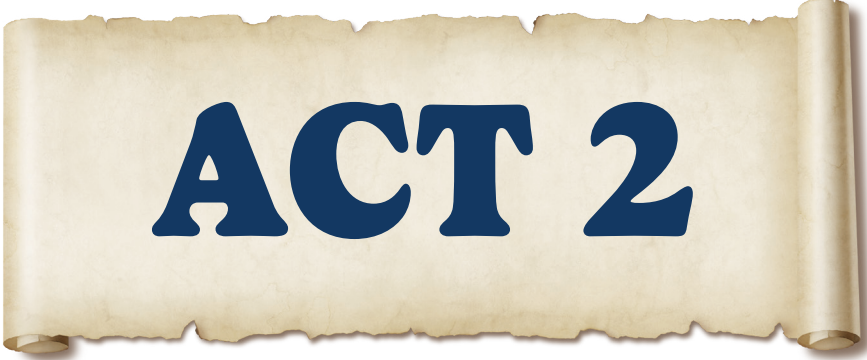
IMĀM ḤUSAYN ﷺ: O my mother
I’ve come to you with a heavy heart
Seeking comfort before I depart
Longing for you before my journey starts
I wish you were here to comfort my pain
I wish you could come and hold your Ḥusayn
I wish O mother to see you again
My heart with tears for you is always stained
Sallallāhu ‘alayki yā Ummī
We started as five now it’s just me
Where are the Ahlul Kisā’ tell me
One by one killed by Allah’s enemies

Mother you know
Of how the ‘Ummah usurps with no shame
Since the day the la’īn shouted your name
Since the day our door was burning with flames
How did they dare to attack our home
To burn the door where grandfather would come
How could they pierce the nail into your son
How could they strike one of Allah’s beloved
I still remember ‘O father’ you cried
I wept as you told us Muḥsin had died
I still remember father’s hands they tied
From that day tears daily fell from your eyes

Now I must go
I wish I could take your comfort with me
Near your grave a part of my soul I leave
Mother my heart feels you answering me
I feel the warmth of your hand in my hair
I hear you say my son don't feel despair,
I hear you say that you'll follow me there
To the land where I'll need my mother's prayer
Thank you Allah for the peace in my heart
Thank you Allah for the strength to depart
Thank you Allah now my journey I start
Knowing that soon from this world I will part
Sallallāhu 'alayki yā Ummī
Soon my grandfather will welcome me
Soon from this world your son will be free
Sallallāhu 'alayki yā Ummī

(Recitation ends.)

END OF ACT 1



ACT 2

Act 2

(KŪFANS CALL THE IMĀM → MUSLIM IBN ‘AQĪL IS KILLED)

Act 2, Scene 1

- CAST
- **NARRATOR**
 - **‘UMAR**
 - **ZAYD**
 - **ḤAMZAH**
 - **‘ABDALLĀH**
 - **MEN ALTOGETHER**

SETTING: A HOME OF A MAN IN KŪFAH

(‘Umar, Zayd, Ḥamzah and ‘Abdallāh sit together. Ḥamzah and ‘Abdallāh are dressed very clearly as Shī‘ah (‘aqīq on right hand, shī‘ah ‘amāmah) while ‘Umar and Zayd are dressed less devoutly (no ‘aqīq, kufi, and a regular ‘aba))

NARRATOR: As the news of Yazīd’s rise to power spreads, the people of Kūfah find themselves filled with worry and fear. The city buzzes with conversations about politics.

‘UMAR: The reports I’ve heard have left me uneasy.

ZAYD: It can’t be that bad—he must be just like his father. We were fine under Mu‘āwiyah, so what’s wrong with his son?

ḤAMZAH: Fine under Mu‘āwiyah? What are you talking about Zayd? Are you completely unaware of what Mu‘āwiyah did as the ruler? This is the same man who fought against the best of the companions of Rasūlullāh and also the best khalīfah—‘Alī ibn Abī Ṭalib! And what’s more troubling is that I hear Yazīd is even worse than his father! A friend told me he is the most bloodthirsty and hard-hearted leader we’ve ever seen.

ZAYD: *(visibly stressed)* But what can we do? How do we prepare ourselves for this? Kūfah is too large and prominent of a city. If we stay here surely we will find ourselves impacted by Yazīd’s cruelty. Perhaps we should take our families to a smaller village where we will be unimportant and ignored.

‘ABDALLĀH: And leave the land of our families to a tyrant ruler? How can you give up your responsibilities so easily? You coward!

‘UMAR: To stay in Kūfah means we will face the brunt of Yazīd’s harshness. Staying means we will never know calm or peace. *(pause)* But leaving doesn’t ensure we will live peacefully either.

ZAYD: Everyone is talking about this, but no one is actually doing anything. We can worry, discuss, and debate all day, but nothing will change!

‘UMAR: It’s true—the people need someone to unite them.

ZAYD: Why don’t you do it? Unite everyone, and I will be behind you.

‘UMAR: Me?! I couldn’t even convince ‘Abdallāh (*Gestures to ‘Abdallāh*) to come with me to the market yesterday. What makes you think a city would march behind me?

(‘Umar & Zayd laugh loudly. Ḥamzah and ‘Abdallāh smile.)

‘ABDALLĀH: You know these aren’t our only options. Have you forgotten? The second son of ‘Alī ibn Abī Ṭālib is still alive. What right does Yazīd have to sit on the throne when the man who once sat on the Prophet’s shoulders still walks among us? Mu‘āwiyah signed an agreement with Imām Ḥasan  stating that he would not appoint a successor—and yet here we are. (*getting heated*) Why should we be forced to accept this?

‘UMAR: Speak like this in the streets, and you’ll find yourself surrounded by swords!

ḤAMZAH: Not at all! We’re not the only ones who feel this way. The entire city is concerned about the new ruler. Without a leader, every man is scared, gossiping in his home. But the grandson of the Prophet  has come up in many gatherings. Imām Ḥusayn  comes from a trustworthy family and offers us a chance at a good, honest life. The boy grew up in the lap of revelation for God’s sake! We would be fools to overlook his abilities! Don’t you remember what it was like under his father’s rule? Every Kūfan knew they were safe living in the capital under a just ruler like ‘Alī ibn Abī Ṭālib.

‘ABDALLĀH: Yes I remember even as a boy watching him give rulings and settle disputes in Masjid al-Kūfah. One time two women came with a baby and each of them claimed that they were the mother.

ZAYD: Ah, yes. I remember.

‘Abdallāh: ‘Alī ibn Abī Ṭālib resolved the dispute so easily by suggesting to divide the baby in half, one for each woman. The true mother quickly said: “*No, don’t hurt the baby—the other woman is the mother.*” In this way, the true mother’s identity became apparent in seconds. No mother would want her child to be harmed, even if it meant losing the child to another woman. That kind of swift justice and wisdom has never been seen under Mu‘āwiyah.

ḤAMZAH: Mu‘āwiyah came and ruled with an iron fist. “Justice” had a price and he was certain that every man could be bought.

‘UMAR: It’s true. Mu‘āwiyah was unfair. My shop lost so much business when he moved the capital to Damascus.

‘ABDALLĀH: I’m telling you, if anyone can overthrow Yazīd, it’s Ḥusayn. He is strong, intelligent, and a fierce warrior. After all, this is the son of the Conqueror of Khaybar!

ZAYD: These stories are all beautiful to listen to, but at the end of the day Ḥusayn is a man just like anyone else. Who knows, he may end up terrorizing us more than Yazīd.

(‘Abdallāh angrily stands up)

‘ABDALLĀH: Zayd, are you insane?! You are talking about one of the Masters of the Youth of Paradise? One who was present on the plains of Mubāhala! The grandson of the Prophet of Allah! When this man was a boy Rasūlullāh would put him in his lap and say: ‘Ḥusayn is from me and I am from Ḥusayn.’ I mean how could you need any more endorsement than that?! He is the man for the job! He is the rightful leader!

‘UMAR: Then why hasn’t he done it already?!

‘ABDALLĀH: Would you rise up without knowing you had any supporters? It would be foolish.

(‘Abdallāh sits down and starts rubbing his eyes/beard in a tired way)

ḤAMZAH: The people of Kūfah have been writing him letters for days now. Perhaps soon, he will realize that we Kūfans will support him. If you’re truly looking for someone to unite us, why not write him a letter yourself?

‘UMAR: What would I even say? And if no one else’s letters have convinced him to come, why would mine?

‘ABDALLĀH: *(He’s tired and frustrated at this point)* Do you have a better solution? By all means, if you’re ready to storm the palace, I’ll stand with you. But if not, at the very least do what is within your capacity. If it is just one letter, then so be it.

ZAYD: Your words are harsh—but true. *(pause)* Then let us write to him together. It will be easier as a group.

‘UMAR: Let me fetch paper and ink.

(Umar retrieves ink and paper from a table or shelf in the corner.)

‘UMAR: *(speaking as he writes, he is muddling around and unsure of his words)* Salāmun ‘alaykum wa raḥmatullāhi wa barakātu Ḥusayn. We write as people from Kūfah who ...

ZAYD: ...who are in need of ... who would appreciate some ... who don’t have the strength ...

(Umar crumples the paper in frustration.)

‘UMAR: How do we write to a man of God?

ḤAMZAH: He is not a fool or hungry for power. If he sees us in need of help, he will want to help us. Let us simply share what is truly in our hearts.

*(The following is recited in the tune of Al ‘Ajal O Master by Abbas Bandali.
‘Umar is writing the entire time, as if he is penning the letter in the moment.)*



ḤAMZAH: It’s yet another day, feeling all alone,
Without your presence, we just can’t go on,

‘ABDALLĀH: Our hearts are praying for your guidance here,
Please come and lead our Friday prayer.

ZAYD: *(he is unsure as he begins reciting)* Abā ‘Abdillāh, the Kūfans need you,
Please send us an answer, tell us what to do.

MEN ALTOGETHER: O light of Allah, please answer our call,
We are all steadfast, to you we’re loyal.

ḤAMZAH: Yā Ḥusayn, Yā Ḥusayn, come to us very soon—we need you.

‘ABDALLĀH: Yā Ḥusayn, Yā Ḥusayn, come and see how we will welcome you.

‘UMAR: Munāfiqs as leaders, we will never accept;
We want to listen to what Rasūlullāh ﷺ said.

ḤAMZAH: Don’t leave us alone by ourselves, isolated.
Bring us the religion; so long we have waited.

MEN ALTOGETHER: O light of Allah, please answer our call,
We are all steadfast; to you we’re loyal.

ZAYD: Yā Ḥusayn, Yā Ḥusayn, just come and visit us and you’ll see.

‘ABDALLĀH: Yā Ḥusayn, Yā Ḥusayn, how committed the Kūfans can be.

We’ve already started preparing for you,

‘UMAR: Our homes are open and filled with the best foods.

ZAYD: So many have pledged to establish your power,

ḤAMZAH: We’ll serve and protect you in our every hour.

MEN ALTOGETHER: O light of Allah, please answer our call.
We are all steadfast; to you we're loyal.

‘UMAR: Yā Ḥusayn, Yā Ḥusayn, we pray that soon you will be our guest.

ḤAMZAH: Yā Ḥusayn, Yā Ḥusayn, you are the only hope we have left.

(Recitation ends. ‘Umar flourishes his feather on the paper as if he is signing it.)

‘UMAR: Yes, this will do well! It feels sincere.

‘ABDALLĀH: It *is* sincere. Without Imām Ḥusayn  to lead us, we have no chance at all.

(‘Umar passes the letter to the other men for them to sign it.)

‘ABDALLĀH: Let us give it to the messenger at once.

ḤAMZAH: I have my own letter to give him as well. Come, we can send them together.

(The men stand to leave.)

‘ABDALLĀH: We will see you men this evening in the mosque, inshā’Allāh.

(‘Umar & Zayd nod)

‘UMAR & ZAYD: Fī amānillāh

ḤAMZAH & ‘ABDALLĀH: Fī amānillāh

(Ḥamzah and ‘Abdallāh leave. ‘Umar and Zayd are left together looking at each other.)

ZAYD: Do you think Ḥusayn can truly fix everything for us?

‘UMAR: The others seem to believe he is the chosen one. As for me, all I know is I want peace. If writing to Ḥusayn means our problems will finally end, then I’ll do it.

ZAYD: I don’t feel as confident as the others. Standing up to Yazīd— a tyrant, son of a tyrant— that is not an easy task.

‘UMAR: But when the time comes, will you defend Ḥusayn? Will you stand with your sword drawn?

ZAYD: I will stand and march alongside him when the time comes. *(pauses, hesitating)* But perhaps we stand at the back of the procession—you and me. *(Zayd smiles slightly)*

‘UMAR: And make sure our servants tie the camels nearby—just in case!

(The men laugh and the lights turn off.)

Act 2, Scene 2

- CAST
- **NARRATOR**
 - **MUSLIM IBN ‘AWSAJAH**
 - **MUSLIM IBN ‘AQĪL**
 - **ḤAMZAH**
 - **ZAYD**
 - **‘UMAR**
 - **‘ABDALLĀH**
 - **MEN ALTOGETHER**

SETTING: THE STAGE SHOWS THE HOME OF MUSLIM IBN ‘AWSAJAH AND THE STREET OUTSIDE THE HOME. THE SCENE BEGINS WITH THE HOME OF MUSLIM IBN ‘AWSAJAH LIT.

NARRATOR: With letters pouring in from Kūfah, the Imām sends Muslim ibn ‘Aqīl to Kūfah to investigate the situation. When Muslim arrives, he stays at the home of Muslim ibn ‘Awsajah, a lover and supporter of the Imām 🕌.

(Muslim ibn ‘Aqīl walks in from another room in the house as Muslim ibn ‘Awsajah is seated in the main area of the home.)

MUSLIM IBN ‘AWSAJAH: *(stands up)* I hope you are comfortable and settled. Food is being prepared and should be ready soon. How was your journey?

MUSLIM IBN ‘AQĪL: Your hospitality has made me feel so welcome, brother. May Allah 🕌 reward you for your kindness. I came here with a purpose—to understand the people of Kūfah. The Imām has received so many letters, but words on paper can often be hollow.

MUSLIM IBN ‘AWSAJAH: That is true. It is hard to know who will stand firm when the time comes. However, even now there are men overjoyed at your arrival, waiting to speak with you outside.

MUSLIM IBN ‘AQĪL: Already?

MUSLIM IBN ‘AWSAJAH: Yes, but I asked them to wait until you are ready to speak with them.

MUSLIM IBN ‘AQĪL: Thank you. Perhaps I can sit and rest for a moment before I meet them. I also want to know your understanding of the situation before we speak to the group.

MUSLIM IBN ‘AWSAJAH: Of course, of course. Whatever you need, brother.

Muslim ibn ‘Awsajah sits down with Muslim ibn ‘Aqīl.



MUSLIM IBN ‘AQĪL: Thank you for your generosity,
The Imām will reward you surely.
I don’t know if these people are strong;
The Kūfans have already done us wrong.
So I have my doubts, do you agree?
Akhī, tell me your thoughts freely.

MUSLIM IBN ‘AWSAJAH: From whatever I have seen, the people are united.
I see deep within their eyes a fire has ignited.
But when the time comes for them to fight,
Some will surely run away at night.
You will have to speak to the people,
To assess their support in detail.

(The men stand and step outside Muslim ibn ‘Awsajah’s home. The men should be elevated as if there are stairs to the front door and Muslim stands higher than the crowd. The crowd of men are heard shouting their salāms and welcomes. Muslim answers their salām and puts his hands up to quiet them.)

MUSLIM IBN ‘AQĪL: O my people, I was sent here by Imām Ḥusayn
To see if you truly want to overthrow Yazid’s reign
So come forth and show me how you feel;
Is the devotion you expressed real?
Speak the truth in front of everyone—
Now I’ll open up the discussion.

ḤAMZAH: I am speaking for my tribe; we have two hundred strong men.
All of us are ready to fight for you—just tell us when.

ZAYD: Yes, we’ll support Ḥusayn in his stand.

‘ABDALLĀH: We have swords and spears ready at hand.

MEN ALTOGETHER: This is our oath of allegiance.
This is our oath of allegiance.

‘UMAR: I will also stand with Ḥusayn let’s topple this regime.

ZAYD: Count me in as well—I’m smart, I can hatch a clever scheme.

‘ABDALLĀH: Yes, my tribe is standing and ready.
You just tell us when and where to be.

MEN ALTOGETHER: This is our oath of allegiance.
This is our oath of allegiance.

ḤAMZAH: Bring the Imām as soon as possible so we can start.
The oppressive leader won’t hear us attacking his court.

‘ABDALLĀH: Yes, we have the element of surprise;
Striking soon is definitely wise.

MEN ALTOGETHER: This is our oath of allegiance.
This is our oath of allegiance.

MUSLIM IBN ‘AQĪL: Kūfans, I must say that truthfully I’m astonished now.
I did not expect to find supporters so strong and proud.
I am sure you’ve become loyal ones;
I’ll write to Imām Ḥusayn at once.
I accept your oath of allegiance.
I accept your oath of allegiance.

(Recitation ends.)

MUSLIM IBN ‘AWSAJAH: *(speaking to the crowd)* Brothers, let us meet again after prayers to begin our planning! Bring any others who are loyal to the cause to my home after Maghribayn.

(The men disperse with energy and chatter between them. Muslim and Muslim ibn ‘Awsajah speak as they return inside the home.)

MUSLIM IBN ‘AQĪL: I must say, I did not expect this much energy and enthusiasm from the men here.

MUSLIM IBN ‘AWSAJAH: Neither did I, but the people are tired of living under tyrants.

MUSLIM IBN ‘AQĪL: Let me write a letter to our Imām ﷺ informing him of what has happened here. Inshā’Allāh, soon we will be free to live as true lovers of the Ahlul Bayt ﷺ.

MUSLIM IBN ‘AWSAJAH: Can you imagine? To once again enjoy the life we knew in Kūfah under Amīrul Mu’minīn.

MUSLIM IBN ‘AQĪL: Inshā’Allāh, brother. Inshā’Allāh.

Act 2, Scene 3

- CAST
- **NARRATOR**
 - **IMĀM ḤUSAYN** 
 - **ḤAMZAH**
 - **ZAYD**
 - **‘UMAR**
 - **‘ABDALLĀH**
 - **DATE SELLER**
 - **RANDOM MAN**
 - **‘UBAYDULLĀH**
 - **ḤAMĪDAH**
 - **MUSLIM IBN ‘AQĪL**

SETTING: ONE SIDE OF THE STAGE IS A STREET IN THE TOWN OF KŪFAH; THE OTHER SIDE IS THE MOSQUE. THE SCENE BEGINS WITH THE STREET LIT UP.

(There are men conducting business in the town. ‘Umar and Zayd speak in stage whispers as they walk through the marketplace.)

‘UMAR: *(speaking to Zayd in a stage whisper)* Yes, he said tomorrow it begins. I did not think it would happen so soon.

ZAYD: I heard Zāhid and ‘Uthmān are joining as well.

‘UMAR: There are so many men now, I’ve stopped keeping count. At least in such a large crowd, they won’t be able to stop us at the gates of the palace.

ZAYD: If you had told me a week ago that I would be part of a revolution, I would’ve laughed in your face. What has this city come to...?

(The pair stop at a date seller's stall. They speak in louder tones.)

ZAYD: Ah, you have a fresh batch! I came here just yesterday looking for these Sukkari dates.

DATE SELLER: Yes, see? I told you we’d have more. It’s good you came back! You should buy some for yourself and your friend so you can enjoy them together.

ZAYD: Of course, but first, we must try them to be sure of their quality!

(‘Umar and Zayd share a knowing look as they smile.)

‘UMAR: Yes, how could we possibly buy them blindly?

DATE SELLER: *(laughs)* Ah, very well, very well. You can each—

(Before the date seller finishes, ‘Ubaydullāh enters the bazaar, his face hidden by a hood. The crowd notices him and erupts in excitement.)

ḤAMZAH: He has finally come! It is Abā ‘Abdillāh!

‘ABDALLĀH: We must give him our allegiance in person!

(The men in the marketplace are all excited, saying Imām Ḥusayn ﷺ has come. Everybody follows the hooded man until they reach inside the mosque.)

RANDOM MAN: Silence! Silence! *(Gesturing toward hooded ‘Ubaydullāh)* This is not the man you think he is! It is not Imām Ḥusayn ﷺ!

(‘Ubaydullāh climbs on the pulpit and removes his face covering. The people are audibly and visibly shocked.)

‘UBAYDULLĀH: O Kūfans! It is I, ‘Ubaydullāh ibn Ziyād! Gather around and listen closely to the message I bring from Damascus! From none other than the esteemed and respected ruler, Yazīd.

(The murmurs stop as the crowd, now uneasy, gathers closer to the pulpit. They stand silently, anxiously waiting.)

(The following lines are recited in the tune of Ba‘ad ma Ashūfak by Bassem Karbalā’i. ‘Ubaydullāh delivers the lines loudly and with commanding authority.)



‘UBAYDULLĀH: I come as a warner,
To those who do not fear
Yazīd and his power.
I come as a warner.
Don’t worry, you have time
To stop and change your mind.
I come as a warner.
O people of Kūfah, do not make this mistake.
When it comes to revolution do not partake.
If you wish to live, then listen for your own sake.
Yazīd has prepared a deal, so hear what’s at stake.
If you stand down, then in gold coins you will be paid,
And you will live in luxury, like a rich shaykh.
But if you choose to fight,
Then we have every right
To stop your revolt and
To torture you at night.

You'll cry loudly in pain.
We will not show restraint.
I come as a warner.
I come as a warner,
And I have my orders.
So will you choose money,
Or will you be slaughtered?
Decide if you want gold,
Or to feel my sharp sword.
I come as a warner.

(Recitation ends. The crowd erupts in chatter between the men.)

‘UBAYDULLĀH: Spread this message to your family and friends. Encourage them to accept the offer of riches and to enjoy the luxury they deserve under Yazīd, our magnanimous ruler of the believers! But if any of you persists in your revolution and continues to associate with Muslim ibn ‘Aqīl, then I encourage you to write your will before nightfall.

(‘Ubaydullāh leaves, and many men follow him out. ‘Umar, Zayd, Ḥamzah, and ‘Abdallāh remain in the mosque along with some extra men.)

ZAYD: Well...so much for standing with Muslim. Clearly this is the end of the revolution.

‘UMAR: There is no other option.

ḤAMZAH: What do you mean there is no option?! How can you give in after one simple threat? Do you expose the weakness in your lineage so easily?

‘UMAR: How dare you! Do you think you will return home and find your wife eager for you to give your life for a man she has never met?! You speak with a sharp tongue, but will your sword be as sharp?

ḤAMZAH: I am not a coward. When we stood with Muslim and surrounded the palace of ‘Ubaydullāh we were successful. There must have been 4,000 of us at least. So what if he threatens us now? If we all remain loyal together we can defeat this government. I will stand with the Imām when he comes. Won't you? *(gesturing to ‘Abdallāh)*

‘ABDALLĀH: *(He is silent for a moment and then begins speaking without making strong eye contact.)* Dying for no reason makes no sense. I mean, the Imām isn't even here. And this isn't an empty threat from ‘Ubaydullāh—these men are ruthless. I mean, wouldn't I be more useful to Imām Ḥusayn ﷺ if I was alive rather than dead?

ḤAMZAH: *(clearly grappling with this idea)* How can you say that? After we've given our allegiance, how can we even think in this manner?

‘ABDALLĀH: Have you seen the Imām? Have you seen a letter from him saying to die in Kūfah for his sake? Muslim is simply a representative. How can we trust that he knows what we should do?

ḤAMZAH: So now you will turn on Ḥusayn as well?!

‘ABDALLĀH: Calm your anger and think with a clear mind. What is the most useful thing to do? If we are alive, we can perhaps be helpful later on. Let us save our death for when it can be most impactful.

(Ḥamzah starts showing some hesitation, thinking quietly to himself. The sound of the adhān begins, signaling the call to prayer. Random man walks back into the mosque and comes to the men.)

RANDOM MAN: Can you believe it—the bazaar is already empty. I even saw women pulling their husbands back inside their homes out of fear!

‘UMAR: See? I told you—this is the end of Ḥusayn and his revolution.

ḤAMZAH: But what of our meeting tonight with Muslim? Why not attend and see what his plan is? Maybe there is still a way forward.

ZAYD: There will be spies everywhere watching each corner of the city. If you attend then you may as well write your own death sentence.

(The men all seem worried and silent as they ponder their options.)

(The following lines are recited in the tune of Al ‘Ajal O Master by Abbas Bandali.)



‘UMAR: We tried our best but now is the time to abandon Muslim —let’s leave him behind.

‘ABDALLĀH: You heard what ‘Ubaydullāh had proclaimed. He’ll kill us if we stand up for Ḥusayn.

ZAYD: *(Speaking to Ḥamzah)* Come with us, my friend; we don’t need to stay.

‘ABDALLĀH: After Muslim’s killed, for him we can pray.

‘UMAR: Let’s all lock our doors, ignore Muslim’s cries. As always, we Kūfans are cowardly guys.

(The men leave the mosque and walk back out onto the streets. By the end of the following lines they are about to step offstage.)

ZAYD: Run away, run away; Ḥusayn isn't worth the sacrifice.
Run away, run away; let us at least enjoy in this life.

(Recitation ends. The lights turn off and when they turn back on it is night and Muslim is standing in the mosque alone.)

MUSLIM IBN 'AQĪL: What have we come to? Can this be the sad state of the ummah? From 4,000 men we only have 30 left to support the Imām. How can so many hearts be swayed from Ḥaqq so easily?

(An announcement from 'Ubaydullāh is heard from off stage.)

'UBAYDULLĀH: Attention! Attention! Anybody seen roaming outside will be considered a supporter of the revolution against the Commander of the Faithful, Yazīd! Remember the warning: if you stand with Muslim, you will not live to see the dawn!

(Muslim leaves the mosque and steps outside onto the street. The area is eerily silent. The date stall is empty, and there is no one in sight. Muslim looks around at the desolate street, then turns to face the audience.)

(The following lines are recited in the tune of Kya Tum Mere Ḥusayn Ho by Mir Ḥasan Mir.)



MUSLIM IBN 'AQĪL: Now that I stand here all alone, I wish that I had said,
Don't come here, O my master.

(He sits on a step or chair in the bazaar, slumped and defeated.)

The Kūfans have betrayed your trust; they have left me for dead.
Don't come here, O my master.

They promised loyalty to you, but I wish I had known...

That these men have no strength in them; they have broken their vow.
How I wish I could tell you of the dangers I face now.
Don't come here, O my master. *(Muslim begins to cry.)*

I'm worried for your daughters; these men have no respect.
I wish that I could tell you to take all your children back.
My heart is struck with terror when I think of 'Asghar's neck.
Don't come here, O my master.

(The sound of men searching for him—boots marching, horses neighing, shouting his name, etc.—comes from off stage. Muslim looks in the direction of the sound and then stands up.)

I hear them looking for me, and I know it's too late.
I wish that I could ask Zaynab to forgive my mistake.
I am the reason Fāṭimah's heart is about to break.
Don't come here, O my master.

Now that I stand here all alone, I wish that I had said,
Don't come here, O my master.

(Recitation ends. The sounds of men's boots, horses, and shouting grow louder.)

MUSLIM IBN 'AQĪL: I must find a way to tell him. There must be something I can do—they have not killed me yet!

(Muslim runs off as the lights go out. The stage is emptied of props and scenery.)

NARRATOR: While Muslim faces his end in Kūfah, his family remains with Imām Ḥusayn ؑ. They are on their journey when the news of Muslim's martyrdom arrives.

(A spotlight turns on, illuminating the center of the stage. Imām Ḥusayn ؑ is standing with Ḥamīdah bint Muslim.)

IMĀM ḤUSAYN ؑ: Come, my dear Ḥamīdah, daughter of my dear cousin Muslim. Come, sit on your uncle's lap.

(Imām Ḥusayn ؑ sits down, and Ḥamīdah sits on his lap on the floor. She looks visibly confused.)

ḤAMĪDAH: Uncle, why have you stopped our whole caravan just for me to sit with you?

(Imām Ḥusayn ؑ places his hand on her head, gently wiping or caressing the top of her head. Ḥamīdah looks up into her uncle's eyes, her expression a mix of confusion and an almost knowing look.)

ḤAMĪDAH: Uncle? What is wrong?

(The following is recited in the tune of Yekī Būd Yekī Nabūd, an Iranian nawḥa.)



IMĀM ḤUSAYN ؑ: O Ḥamīdah, my darling girl, how do I answer you now?

(hesitate before the next line)

You've become one of my children; your father has left this world.

(Ḥamīdah begins crying and puts her hands in her face to sob. Imām Ḥusayn ؑ holds her closer.)

My child, don't worry—I am here.
I'll hold you as you cry, my dear.
My darling, don't you fear.

My darling, don't you fear—we will all mourn along with you.
Weep as loudly as you want; nobody will come to strike you.
I can hold you as you cry.

I can hold you as you cry and put you to sleep every night.
As an orphan, you deserve love, and this comfort is your right.
My daughters will become your sisters; now you won't be alone.
Just promise me you'll do the same for them when I am no more.

(He rocks back and forth with her in his lap.)

My child, don't worry—I am here.
I'll hold you as you cry, my dear.
My child, don't worry—I am here.
I'll hold you as you cry, my dear.

(The lights begin to fade on the scene of Imām Ḥusayn  holding Ḥamīdah as she cries, while Imām Ḥusayn  continues to recite.)

My child, don't worry—I am here.
I'll hold you as you cry, my dear.
My child, don't worry—I am here.
I'll hold you as you cry, my dear.

(Recitation ends.)

END OF ACT 2



ACT 3

Act 3

(IMĀM ḤUSAYN ﷺ TRAVELING TO KARBALĀ' → SHĀM E GHARĪBĀN)

Act 3, Scene 1

CAST

- NARRATOR
- IMĀM ḤUSAYN ﷺ
- ḤAḌRAT 'ABBĀS
- MAN

SETTING: THE STAGE IS FILLED WITH A LINE OF TRAVELERS ON CAMELS.

(The caravan begins on one side of the stage and slowly makes its way toward the other side.)

NARRATOR: After being intercepted on their way to Kūfah, the caravan of Imām Ḥusayn ﷺ is forcibly rerouted to Karbalā'. We join the caravan as they enter this land.

(Ḥaḍrat 'Abbās and Imām Ḥusayn ﷺ ride side by side.)

IMĀM ḤUSAYN ﷺ: As we arrive on this land I feel uneasy. My dearest brother 'Abbās, let us stop the caravan for a moment.

ḤAḌRAT 'ABBĀS: Yes, my Mawlā.

(They stop riding and the caravan stops. Imām Ḥusayn ﷺ turns to some people who are gathered nearby.)

(The following lines are recited in the tune of Tizuroni by Bassem Karbalā'ī.)



IMĀM ḤUSAYN ﷺ: Where have we come? What is this land?
My heart feels heavy on these sands

Someone tell me where we've come—now that we have stopped.
Is there a name for this land where my heart has dropped?
Someone tell me.

(The following dialogue is spoken, not recited.)

MAN: Sir, this is the land of Ṭaff.

IMĀM ḤUSAYN ﷺ: Ṭaff? Yes, I have heard this name. But is there another name for this land?

MAN: Some have called it Naynawā.

IMĀM ḤUSAYN 🌿: But is there another name for this land?

MAN: Others say it is called Ghāḍiriyya.

IMĀM ḤUSAYN 🌿: But is there another name for this land?

MAN: I have even heard it called Karbalā’.

(Imām Ḥusayn’s face changes, becoming heavy with emotion. He nods

and then continues reciting in the tune of Tizuroni by Bassem Karbalā’i.)



IMĀM ḤUSAYN 🌿: My father told
Me of this land.
My blood will be
Mixed with these sands.
The time has come to stop and set up our tents.
Soon this land with our pure blood will be blessed.

(He stage whispers to himself.)

IMĀM ḤUSAYN 🌿: Yā Allah (swt)! Yā Raḥmān! Yā Raḥīm. Help me.

(Recitation ends.)

ḤAḌRAT ‘ABBĀS: My *Mawlā*, I will begin setting up the tents with the others.

IMĀM ḤUSAYN 🌿: Let us settle the women and children first, so they can rest.

ḤAḌRAT ‘ABBĀS: Yes, of course, my *Mawlā*. I will tell the men; we will make quick work of it.

IMĀM ḤUSAYN 🌿: Once we are settled, there is a letter I must send to an old friend in Kūfah.

(The men begin moving to unpack and settle. The lights go out to set up the stage for the next scene.)

Act 3, Scene 2

CAST

- **NARRATOR**
- **IMĀM ḤUSAYN** ﷺ
- **ḤADRAT ‘ABBĀS**
- **ḤABĪB**
- **WIFE**
- **SERVANT**
- **‘ĀBIS**
- **ZUHAYR**
- **COMPANION**
- **QĀSIM**
- **BAD GUY**
- **ḤURR**
- **MEN ALTOGETHER**

SETTING: THE CAMP OF IMĀM ḤUSAYN ﷺ TAKES UP HALF OF THE STAGE. ON THE OTHER HALF, THERE IS A TABLECLOTH ON THE FLOOR WITH FOOD WHERE ḤABĪB IBN MUẒĀHIR AND HIS WIFE SIT TO EAT BREAKFAST. ONLY THE PORTION WITH ḤABĪB’S HOME IS LIT.

NARRATOR: It is morning in Kūfah and we join Ḥabīb ibn Maẓāhir and his wife as they eat breakfast.

ḤABĪB: I cannot believe how many days have passed since Muslim was killed, and still, I cannot stop thinking about him.

WIFE: Kūfah is in a state of shock. I feel it as well. There must be something we can do!

ḤABĪB: In one lifetime, I have seen Kūfah in so many different states. Sometimes it feels like home. But other times, I cannot feel comfortable in any corner of the city.

(A messenger is heard knocking off stage.)

WIFE: How strange. A knock on the door to begin our day. Go see who it is my dear.

(Ḥabīb smiles at his wife and exits off stage. His wife continues to eat with the proper etiquette of eating (eating small bites with her right hand). Ḥabīb re-enters with a letter and sits back down on the floor at the suḥrah to read the letter. As he reads it silently the voice of Imām Ḥusayn ﷺ reads it out loud from offstage.)

IMĀM ḤUSAYN ﷺ: From Ḥusayn ibn ‘Alī ibn Abī Ṭālib to the pious and knowledgeable man, Ḥabīb ibn Muẓāhir. Peace be upon you, O Ḥabīb! You are aware of our close relationship with the Messenger of Allah (peace be upon him and his family), and you know us better than

others. You are a man of noble character and honor. Therefore, do not withhold yourself from supporting us, and the Messenger of Allah will reward you on the Day of Judgment.

(Ḥabīb folds the letter and stares down with concern. His wife notices his face and immediately stops eating.)

WIFE: Ḥabīb, are you okay?

(Ḥabīb pauses, staring blankly for a moment.)

ḤABĪB: It is a letter from Imām Ḥusayn ؑ. He is in need of my support. Yazīd's army has directed him to Karbalā', where they intend to fight him. *(pauses, then looks at his wife)* He writes to ask me to join his small army and stand against Yazīd.

(Ḥabīb's wife answers immediately.)

WIFE: The grandson of the Prophet ؐ is calling you, and you stay here sitting with me? How can that be? We must prepare at once. Make arrangements to leave as soon as you possibly can.

(Ḥabīb stares at his wife for a moment, then smiles.)

WIFE: Come, come! I will clean up, and we can have you packed and ready to leave.

ḤABĪB: I am blessed to have a wife such as you.

Wife: There is no other option when it comes to standing for ḥaqq. You'll have to find a way to arrange an escape from the city. With the lockdown in place, it will be difficult to leave without being caught. We must move quickly!

(Ḥabīb's wife begins picking things up off the tablecloth and putting them away or taking them offstage.)

(The following lines are recited in the tune of Zaynab ka Nām Musallay Par by Mir Hasan Mir. Throughout the recitation, Ḥabīb prepares to leave.)



ḤABĪB: I may be old, my youth has gone, but I'll always answer my Imām.
I may be old, my youth has gone, but I'll always answer my Imām.
How could I receive my Master's note and not rush to answer his call?
I may be old, my youth has gone, but I'll always answer my Imām.

(At this point, the tablecloth has been cleared. Ḥabīb's wife begins bringing clothes for him to pack into a bag.)

For years I have had the honor
To serve this household I treasure.
Such generosity from God,

To meet not one but four leaders.
And now my sword will soon be drawn as I go to answer my Imām.

I may be old, my youth has gone, but I'll always answer my Imām.
I may be old, my youth has gone, but I'll always answer my Imām.

(Ḥabīb has packed his belongings and bids farewell to his wife, who exits the stage. He recites alone, looking around as if moving stealthily through the city.)

Allah, help me to find a way
To leave Kūfah while it's still day.
I cannot wait one more minute
To join my beloved Ḥusayn.
At the time of prayers, I'll run and ride my horse straight to my Imām.

I may be old, my youth has gone, but I'll always answer my Imām.
I may be old, my youth has gone, but I'll always answer my Imām.

(Ḥabīb approaches his servant, who holds Ḥabīb's horse. He recites to the servant. By this point, the only item left on this side of the stage is the horse.)

You've served me well; now you are free.
Return to Kūfah as you please.

SERVANT: My master, please don't leave me alone,
I'll serve the Imām if you allow.
Please take me with you, and I vow to fight to protect our Imām.
I may be free, my service done, but now I'll get to serve my Imām.

(The two men mount the horse together and ride toward the camp of Imām Ḥusayn ﷺ. A spotlight follows them as they move, and as they arrive, the lighting on the camp of Imām Ḥusayn ﷺ is on.)

ḤABĪB: I may be old, my youth has gone, but I'll always answer my Imām.
I may be old, my youth has gone, but I'll always answer my Imām.

(Ḥabīb arrives in Karbalā' and immediately sees Imām Ḥusayn ﷺ.)

ḤABĪB: O my master, I say my salām.
Seeing your face, my heart feels calm.

IMĀM ḤUSAYN ﷺ: Welcome to you, my childhood friend.
For you, Zaynab her salāms has sent.

HABĪB: What kind of tragedy has come for Zaynab to send me her salām?

(Ḥabīb finishes his recitation as he approaches a tent and puts his bag down.)

HABĪB: I may be old, my youth has gone, but with my death, I'll serve my Imām.
I may be old, my youth has gone, but with my death, I'll serve my Imām.

(Recitation ends. The stage goes dark.)

NARRATOR: On the seventh of Muḥarram, Imām Ḥusayn ﷺ, his family, and his army are denied access to the water of the river Furāt. On the ninth of Muḥarram, we join them as they spend one final night in prayer before they make the ultimate sacrifice.

(The tents are lit. The companions and the men of Banū Hāshim sit together—some reciting tasbīḥ, some sharpening swords, and some reading the Qurʾān. Imām Ḥusayn ﷺ enters the tent, and all of the men stand up in respect.)

IMĀM ḤUSAYN ﷺ: My dear companions and family. I glorify Allah ﷻ and praise Him in times of prosperity and misfortune. I praise Allah ﷻ for bestowing Prophethood upon our family, giving us the Qurʾān, and granting us the senses and intellect to enlighten our hearts. May Allah ﷻ enter us among the fold of His grateful servants.

(He sits down, and all the men sit down after him. His seat should be slightly elevated so the audience can see him.)

I have not known any companions more faithful and devout than you.
I have not known any family more considerate, affectionate, and loyal than my family.
May Allah ﷻ reward you on my behalf for your presence here and your devotion to the religion of Allah ﷻ.

(He pauses.)

The enemy sits across from us, enjoying this world and preparing to end our time here.
Tomorrow, not a single one of us will be spared. So here and now, I lift from you the responsibility, allegiance, and oaths you have given.

(The light dims so the audience sees only the outlines of the figures sitting together.)

Let the darkness of the night cover you as you leave me freely. Take the hand of one of my family members and disperse into the villages and cities. These people desire to kill me and only me.

(Ḥaḍrat ʿAbbās stands up swiftly.)

HADHRAT ‘ABBĀS: My *Mawlā*, how could we ever leave you?! What use would it be to escape into the night to live in a world where you would no longer exist? A life like that would not be worth living!

(The companions agree loudly, exclaiming phrases such as “Of course!” and “How could we?!” among the group. The lights return to normal as the men begin to recite.)

(The following dialogue is recited in the tune of Hayatuna Husayn by Hossein Taheri.)



‘ĀBIS: All our lives for Husayn.

ZUHAYR: And our deaths for Husayn.

COMPANION: We will never leave Husayn.

ZUHAYR: We will serve you, for Zahrā’.

MEN ALTOGETHER: All our lives for Husayn, and our deaths for Husayn.
We will never leave Husayn; we will serve you for Zahrā’.

‘ĀBIS: Yā Abā ‘Abdillāh,
You are in our every breath.
For you, we run to death.
Husayn, Husayn!

MEN ALTOGETHER: *(fists raised in the air)* Husayn, Husayn!

HADHRAT ‘ABBĀS: Yā ‘Azīz az-Zahrā’,
Your servants are ready to die.
Call us, and we will reply.
Husayn, Husayn!

MEN ALTOGETHER: *(fists raised in the air)* Husayn, Husayn!

ZUHAYR: Yā Abā ash-Shuhadā,
Ḥaqq is with you and Allah.
For you, our swords we’ll draw.
Husayn, Husayn!

MEN ALTOGETHER: *(fists raised in the air)* Husayn, Husayn!

QĀSIM: Yā Qātil al-‘Abrā,
We give everything in your way.
For martyrdom, we pray.
Ḥusayn, Ḥusayn!

MEN ALTOGETHER: *(fists raised in the air)* Ḥusayn, Ḥusayn!

COMPANION: Yā Sayyid al-Shuhadā,
If only we had more lives,
For us to sacrifice.
Ḥusayn, Ḥusayn!

MEN ALTOGETHER: *(fists raised in the air)* Ḥusayn, Ḥusayn!

COMPANION: Yā Miṣbāḥ al-Hudā,
They can take our lives away,
Even in death we’ll say:
Ḥusayn, Ḥusayn!

MEN ALTOGETHER: *(fists raised in the air)* Ḥusayn, Ḥusayn!

‘ĀBIS: Ḥusayn,
We can only pray
To serve in your way.

ḤAḌRAT ‘ABBĀS: Each and every day.

‘ĀBIS: Ḥusayn,
Now the time is here
To sharpen our spears.

QĀSIM: We see our death near.

MEN ALTOGETHER: All our lives for Ḥusayn, and our deaths for Ḥusayn.
All our lives for Ḥusayn, and our deaths for Ḥusayn.
Our beloved Ḥusayn, we will serve him for Zahrā’.

(Recitation ends.)

IMĀM ḤUSAYN ﷺ: I thank Allah ﷻ for companions and family members with such courage, loyalty, and bravery. Your reward lies with Allah ﷻ, and soon you will taste its sweetness!

(Imām Ḥusayn ﷺ leaves, and the men resume their preparations for the battle as they recite the chorus.)

(The light fades on the camp of Imām Ḥusayn ﷺ as they finish reciting. The other half of the stage lights up, revealing Ḥurr sitting on a stool with his weapons and possibly a tasbīḥ near him. The sound of laughter and enjoyment comes from offstage in the background.)

NARRATOR: As the time for battle approached, there were those on the side of Yazīd who found their hearts uneasy. Let us join Ḥurr ibn Yazīd ar-Riyāḥī as he prepares for war with a heart full of doubt.

BAD GUY: You sit in here as if it's a funeral! Come enjoy with us—there's plenty of fun to go around!

ḤURR: Let me ensure my things are ready for tomorrow first.

BAD GUY: Why bother preparing your weapons?! There are so many of us, you may never need to even raise your sword!

(Ḥurr continues to sharpen his sword silently. The bad guy rolls his eyes.)

BAD GUY: Have it your way, but I'm not going to miss out on the celebrations.

(The bad guy leaves. Ḥurr, now alone, looks very conflicted. He stops sharpening his sword, places his hands on his head, and sits silently for a moment. Then he begins to speak to himself.)

ḤURR: I am sharpening a blade that will taste the blood of the Prophet's grandson. The Prophet's grandson. Why do I feel such disgust toward my own sharpened sword? How? How can a man enter a battle like this? How do I draw my sword against Ḥusayn while praying none of my strikes succeed?

(Ḥurr lifts his head and recites, facing the audience.)

(The following lines are recited in the tune of Sakīna Utho Meri Jān Utho by Syed Irfan Haider.)



ḤURR: Ḥurr, what have you done?
Who have you become?
Fighting for Yazīd,
Not the chosen one.

(He lifts his head higher, standing as he continues to recite.)

The son of Zahrā'
Will soon be alone.
How can you sit here
Like ḥaqq you don't know?

(He begins pacing, alternating corners of his side of the stage for each stanza.)

This all started with a call from ‘Ubayd.
To reroute Ḥusayn, we set a blockade.
When I saw his caravan with children,
I felt sure Yazīd would not harm them.
How could I have known his heart was so hard?
How could I have known what Yazīd would start?

Ḥurr, what have you done?
Who have you become?
Fighting for Yazīd,
Not the chosen one.

When I met Ḥusayn, he welcomed my men.
He quenched the thirst of my horses by hand.
At the time for prayer, behind him we stood.
The essence of worship, he understood.
I stopped and I thought just for a moment:
How could I make myself his opponent?

Ḥurr, what have you done?
Who have you become?
Fighting for Yazīd,
Not the chosen one.

He spoke with me patiently and explained,
The people of Kūfah called him by name.
He showed me the letters that he received,
His intentions clear, and his sword was sheathed.
But I did not think—I simply replied:
I had my orders, and my hands were tied.

Ḥurr, what have you done?
Who have you become?
Fighting for Yazīd,
Not the chosen one.

When Imām Ḥusayn told me his prayer—
That my mother weep over me—I feared.
How could I respond in likeness to him?
His mother was the Queen of all Women.

I prayed in my heart this would end with peace,
Not with crying children and rivers seized.

Ḥurr, what have you done?
Who have you become?
Fighting for Yazīd,
Not the chosen one.

(His body language shifts, becoming more desperate. This stanza signals his decision to switch sides in his heart.)

How will I face Fāṭimah when I die,
After I have made her grandchildren cry?
After I have denied Ḥusayn water,
How can I expect to drink from Kawthar?
How can I ever begin to repent?
I can't show my face at my Master's tent.

Ḥurr, what have you done?
Who have you become?
Fighting for Yazīd,
Not the chosen one.

(Ḥurr collects his sword, shield, and belongings during this stanza.)

This is my last chance—come, let me be brave.
Better to cry now than in my own grave.
The Imām is kind; maybe he'll accept.
I must leave Yazīd—it's time to defect.
Allah, give me strength to serve my Imām.
Please give me the chance to die for Islām.

(He stands, ready to leave his tent.)

Ḥurr, now is your time,
With guidance divine.
This is your moment—To heaven you'll climb.
The truth I can see,
My heart is now free.
As I ride, I'll pray:
Imām, forgive me.

(Recitation ends. Ḥurr exits, riding toward the camp of Imām Ḥusayn ﷺ, filled with determination.)

Act 3, Scene 3

- CAST**
- **NARRATOR**
 - **IMĀM ḤUSAYN** ﷺ
 - **ḤADRAT ‘ABBĀS:**
 - **COMPANION**
 - **COMPANION 1**
 - **COMPANION 2**
 - **‘ĀBIS**
 - **ZUHAYR**
 - **SA‘ĪD**
 - **‘ALĪ AKBAR**
 - **UMM LAYLĀ**
 - **QĀSIM**
 - **UMM FARWAH**
 - **SAYYIDAH ZAYNAB**
 - **IMĀM AL-MAHDĪ** ﷺ

SETTING: THE CAMP OF IMĀM ḤUSAYN ﷺ TAKES UP HALF OF THE STAGE. THE OTHER HALF IS AN OPEN SPACE OUTSIDE THE TENTS, USED FOR FIGHTING, ETC.

NARRATOR: The day of ‘Āshūrā’ has arrived. Fighting began in the morning, and the thirsty army of the Imām ﷺ has protected the family of the Prophet ﷺ diligently.

COMPANION 1: Now that I have seen how their group has attacked our flanks, I am certain these men will not hold back when the time comes to kill the Imām ﷺ. I still cannot believe that the time has truly come where they openly attack the son of Fāṭimah ﷺ. I was prepared, but in my heart, I felt maybe they would change their minds.

COMPANION 2: But what an honor they have given us—the chance to protect our Imām ﷺ! And did you not see how their left flank ended on the right and their right on the left? These warriors stand with falsehood so much that even in combat, they change from side to side without thinking.

‘ĀBIS: Finally, the opportunity to defend the Imām ﷺ in one-on-one, man-to-man combat has come. We must be the first ones to go! How could we stand by and watch the blood of Rasūlullāh ﷺ spilled on these sands?

ZUHAYR: Yes, indeed! I will ask for permission to defend the son of Zahrā’.

(Zuhayr approaches Imām Ḥusayn ﷺ.)

ZUHAYR: O my *Mawlā*, I know I am the leader of the right wing of your army, but I find my heart cannot sit still. I must go and defend you! Do you give me permission?

IMĀM ḤUSAYN 🕌: Zuhayr, your companionship in a time like this will be rewarded by Allah 🕌. I give you permission.

(Zuhayr moves toward the other side of the stage (the open side), where there is a line of enemy soldiers waiting.)

(He recites the following in the tune of I Am 'Alī by the Servants of Zahrā'.)



ZUHAYR: I am Zuhayr, and I'm the son of Qayn.
With my sword drawn, I will defend Ḥusayn.
I am Zuhayr, and I'm the son of Qayn.
With my sword drawn, I will defend Ḥusayn.
It is not too late
For you to create
A different fate.
Come fight for Ḥusayn and be free.
Come fight for Ḥusayn and be free.

If you choose to stay
And fight here today
On the final day,
Allah will make you pay.
Then don't come and say,
"Oh, but we did pray,"
While you've disobeyed
By attacking Ḥusayn,
By attacking Ḥusayn.

Now come and fight
With all your might.
I'll watch the light
Leaving your eyes.
Don't try to run—
Come one by one.
And when I'm done,
I'll reunite.
Waiting for me
Will be 'Alī.

Together we
Will cry aloud: LABBAYK, LABBAYK!

(Recitation ends. An enemy soldier steps forward, initiating combat with Zuhayr. As they fight, Zuhayr forces the soldier backward until they both move offstage. The lights go out briefly, and the sound of swords clashing is heard. The lights come back on as Zuhayr re-enters, covered in dust and dirt, visibly exhausted but determined.)

ZUHAYR: My *Mawlā*, I returned when I heard the call for prayer.

COMPANION: But it seems these men will not stop fighting for even a moment to allow us to pray our afternoon prayers! How can they even begin to claim to be the party of *ḥaqq*?

IMĀM ḤUSAYN ﷺ: My beloved companions, we will pray *Ṣalātul Khawf*. Come, Zuhayr, join us before you return to battle.

ZUHAYR: My *Mawlā*, I will complete my prayers with your grandfather. I will protect your prayer with my life.

(Another man steps forward.)

SA'ID: As will I!

(The prayers begin, with Sa'īd and Zuhayr standing in front of the Imām ﷺ as he leads the men. The Imām's takbīrs throughout the prayer are the only audible part of the prayer. Sa'īd and Zuhayr lock arms and move in unison, shielding the Imām ﷺ from the arrows flying toward them. Throughout, they can be heard reciting together.)

SA'ID & ZUHAYR: All our lives for Ḥusayn,
And our death for Ḥusayn.

(They repeat this line, their voices growing weaker with each repetition. By the end of the prayer, both collapse, having taken many arrows. Imām Ḥusayn ﷺ sits near them.)

IMĀM ḤUSAYN ﷺ: My companions, you have given your lives for something most beloved to Allah ﷻ: the *ṣalāh*!

O Allah ﷻ! I am proud to commend to You the souls of these two servants who gave their lives for *ṣalāh*.

Please, Allah ﷻ, grant them Your *raḥmah*.

THE GROUP: Āmīn!

(Ābis quickly steps forward from the lines of jamā'ah and approaches the Imām ﷺ.)

‘ĀBIS: O my Imām, I have finished my last prayer in this world, and I am yearning to finally reunite with your father and grandfather. Please, give me permission to go and defend the religion of Allah ﷻ.

IMĀM ḤUSAYN ﷺ: May Allah ﷻ reward you for your certainty and loyalty. I give you my permission.

(‘Ābis moves to the empty side of the stage, where a row of enemy soldiers stands.)

(He begins reciting in the tune of I Am ‘Alī by the Servants of Zahrā’.)



‘ĀBIS: Now come and meet ‘Ābis ibn Shabīḥ.
Surely a warrior is what you’ll see.
Now come and meet ‘Ābis ibn Shabīḥ.
Surely a warrior is what you’ll see.

You may think I’m old,
But my sword I hold,
Ready to fight for
Ḥusayn and his progeny.
Ḥusayn and his progeny.
Maybe you had seen
Me fight in Ṣiffīn.
Yes, unlike Yazīd,
My lineage is clean.

I’m always with ḥaqq,
Even when I’m struck.
I never need luck—
I just say Yā ‘Alī!
I just say Yā ‘Alī!

(As ‘Ābis steps forward to approach the soldiers, they back away in fear. ‘Ābis continues reciting as he removes his armor.)

‘ĀBIS: Don’t run away—
Are you not brave
To fight a man
Of my old age?

Look I removed
My armor too
And gave it to
The one you'll slay

I want to die,
Giving my life
In sacrifice,
And so I cry:
LABBAYK, LABBAYK!

(Recitation ends. There is a moment of darkness. When the lights come on, 'Alī Akbar approaches Imām Husayn ﷺ.)

'ALĪ AKBAR: Father. I must defend you. My blood must be mixed with the sands of Karbalā'. I cannot wait any longer.

IMĀM HUSAYN ﷺ: *(after a pause, as he hunches over slightly)* Very well, bid farewell to your mother.

'ALĪ AKBAR: I will. And when I return, I will bid farewell to you one last time.

(‘Alī Akbar turns and enters the tent where Umm Laylā sits on a prayer mat.)

UMM LAYLĀ: *(her voice shaking ever so slightly)* Is it time?

'ALĪ AKBAR: It is. *(he pauses)* Mother, I cannot begin to—

UMM LAYLĀ: ‘Alī Akbar, my son. *(she takes a deep breath as silent tears fall)* What a man you have become. And yet, a part of me will always see in you the sweet, loving, generous boy who I would put to sleep each night. You are, like your grandfather ‘Alī, a true Hāshimī warrior. And yet that same bravery is the cause for this heartbreak that I feel will never end. *(she places her hand on his cheek)*. My son, sit with us for a moment so we may enjoy one last ziyārah of the face of Rasūlullāh. Give your mother a moment to prepare to bear this loss.

(Umm Laylā runs her hand through ‘Alī Akbar’s hair. She places her hands on either side of his face as if to memorize each detail in it. She places her forehead against his forehead and begins shaking as she cries. Then she pulls her head back to look at him. She wipes her tears with her hands and wipes them on ‘Alī Akbar’s forehead and cheeks.)

UMM LAYLĀ: Take these tears of sacrifice with you. And when you finally meet your grandmother, let her see all that I have given for the sake of Allah ﷻ.

'ALĪ AKBAR: I will, Mother, of course.

(He gives her a final hug and returns to the Imām ﷺ.)

‘ALĪ AKBAR: Father, I have bid farewell, and I am ready to go.

IMĀM ḤUSAYN ﷺ: O Allah! Bear witness that I am sending to the battlefield the one who has the most resemblance to Your Prophet in his looks, his akhlāq, and his mannerisms.

(Imām Ḥusayn ﷺ walks ‘Alī Akbar to the edge of the battlefield. They embrace, and Imām Ḥusayn ﷺ watches ‘Alī Akbar as he walks onto the battlefield.)

(The following lines are recited in the tune of I Am ‘Alī by the Servants of Zahrā’.)



‘ALĪ AKBAR: I am the mirror of God’s perfection.

I am a branch of the best creation.

I am the mirror of God’s perfection.

I am a branch of the best creation.

The face of Ṭāhā,
The pride of Zahrā’
The prince of Laylā—
I’m ‘Alī, grandson of ‘Alī.
I’m ‘Alī, grandson of ‘Alī.

The pure will not be
Ruled by the dā’ī.
Come forth and you’ll see
The strength of an ‘Alawī.
Don’t try and tempt me
With security.
Surely soon you’ll see
You’ll need it more than me.
You’ll need it more than me.

Now watch me ride
Like a roaring lion.
I see the fear
Within their eyes.
Two hundred I
Send to the fire,
Praising my Lord
With every strike.
Looking toward
My death, I smile,

As I cry aloud:
To Paradise, LABBAYK, LABBAYK!

(Recitation ends. The stage goes dark. There is a moment of silence. Then, in the darkness, the voice of Imām Ḥusayn ﷺ calls out.)

IMĀM ḤUSAYN ﷺ: *(offstage, in a trembling and sorrowful voice)* O my son, ‘Alī Akbar!

(The lights remain off. When they turn back on, the focus shifts to another part of the stage. We see Qāsim sitting in a tent with his mother.)

QĀSIM: *(frustrated)* Mother, my uncle gives permission to ‘Alī Akbar, but when will it be my turn? I wish to go to the battlefield and show my courage in defending him.

UMM FARWAH: Qāsim. My dearest, wonderful, strong, brave Qāsim. You are your grandfather’s grandson. You are a warrior from Banū Hāshim. Don’t worry, my dear—you will have your chance to defend your uncle and Imām.

(Umm Farwah turns and retrieves something from a bag in the corner as Qāsim complains.)

QĀSIM: How can you be sure? You speak so calmly, but Mother, I am restless!

(Umm Farwah hands Qāsim an envelope or letter.)

UMM FARWAH: Your father knew you would be strong like him. He knew you would love your uncle as much as he loved him. Present this to your uncle, and I know you will have the honor of meeting your grandmother soon.

(Umm Farwah hugs her son, kisses his forehead, and returns to her prayer mat. The lighting dims on the tent as Qāsim steps out and approaches Imām Ḥusayn ﷺ.)

QĀSIM: Uncle, I come to you once again. But this time, I did not come empty-handed.

IMĀM ḤUSAYN ﷺ: My dear boy, I know you would serve me with such bravery, but I cannot let my brother’s young son simply walk into the battlefield.

(Qāsim hands Imām Ḥusayn ﷺ the letter and waits impatiently as the Imām reads it. Imām Ḥusayn ﷺ audibly cries after reading it. The two embrace tightly.)

IMĀM ḤUSAYN ﷺ: I cannot say no when your father has asked me on your behalf. I see my brother did not leave me alone here in Karbalā’, even though he is not alive to support me in battle.

(Qāsim and Imām Ḥusayn ﷺ embrace and cry audibly for a full 20 seconds, their sobs resonating through the stage.)

QĀSIM: Thank you, my uncle.

(Qāsim rides into the battlefield area)

(He begins reciting the following lines in the tune of I Am 'Alī by the Servants of Zahrā'.)



QĀSIM: I am Qāsim, the son of Ḥasan.
I am Rasūlullāh's great-grandson.
I am Qāsim, the son of Ḥasan.
I am Rasūlullāh's great-grandson.

I was trained in war,
Like my grandfather,
Who lifted the door.
Just wait, and my strength you will see.
Just wait, and my strength you will see.

My death is to me
Sweeter than honey.
Soon I will be free;
With my father, I'll be.
I'm ready to die
And to sacrifice.
On God I rely;
Heaven I'm guaranteed.
Heaven I'm guaranteed.

My tongue is dry,
Water denied,
And yet my sword
Is still held high.
My grandfather,
You'll remember,
When you see how
Your heads will fly.
My uncle will
See me fulfill
My father's trust
As you I kill. LABBAYK, LABBAYK!

(Recitation ends. A soldier approaches and begins fighting with Qāsim. The lights go out. The sound of swords clashing echoes in the darkness. After a few clashes, we hear Qāsim's voice, strained and in pain.)

QĀSIM: Uncle! Uncle, help me! Help me!

(Another moment of silence follows, enveloping the stage in darkness. The voice of Imām Ḥusayn ؑ is heard)

IMĀM ḤUSAYN ؑ: *Innā lillāh wa innā ilayhi rāji'ūn, riḍan bi-qaḍā'ihī wa taslīman li-amrihi. Innā lillāh wa innā ilayhi rāji'ūn, riḍan bi-qaḍā'ihī wa taslīman li-amrihi. (His voice begins to quiver as if crying.) Innā lillāh wa innā ilayhi rāji'ūn, riḍan bi-qaḍā'ihī wa taslīman li-amrihi.*

(When the lights turn on, Sayyidah Zaynab ؑ, Umm Farwah, Umm Laylā, and Ruqayya are in the tent crying together. Imām Zaynul 'Ābidīn lies on a cot or cloth in the corner. Umm Rabāb is seated outside the other side of the tent (near offstage), crying near a fresh grave. Imām Ḥusayn ؑ stands outside the tent on the other side. He raises his hands and looks to the sky.)

IMĀM ḤUSAYN ؑ: O Allah ؑ! You are my support in all severities and are my hope in all adversities. *La ḥawla wa la quwwata illa billāh.*

(Imām Ḥusayn ؑ faces the audience.)

(He begins reciting the following in the tune of Acha Baba Sulane to Aagayna by Zain Shah.)



IMĀM ḤUSAYN ؑ: Now I stand here on the plains of Karbobalā'.
My companions have died - *Yā fursān al-hayjā'*!
My brothers, and my uncles, and sons are all gone.
The enemies attacked them with their swords drawn.

Even my infant 'Alī al-'Asghar they shot.
Tell me, what was his sin? Only water he sought.
Now is the time to leave behind my family,
And for this sacrifice Allah is pleased with me.

(Imām Ḥusayn ؑ enters the tent, and the women rush to be near him.)

IMĀM ḤUSAYN ؑ: O my women, your sacrifice Allah accepts.
Find the strength to be patient after I have left.

(The women return to sitting.)

O my women, your sacrifice Allah accepts.
Find the strength to be patient after I have left.

(Imām Ḥusayn ؑ speaks to Umm Laylā.)

IMĀM ḤUSAYN ﷺ: Come here, let me bid farewell, Umm Laylā.
When I see him, I will hug our son Akbar.
He is waiting for me with his great-grandfather.
Don't worry, O my dear, he was given water.
And my father has healed the wound on his chest.
Find the strength to be patient after I have left.
Umm Laylā, your sacrifice Allah accepts.
Find the strength to be patient after I have left.

(Imām Ḥusayn ﷺ speaks to Umm Farwah.)

IMĀM ḤUSAYN ﷺ: O my sister-in-law, O Umm Farwah,
How can I even speak to you of your young son?
I know Qāsim was into the heavens welcomed,
And he is sitting next to his father Ḥasan.
Qāsim is free, but now it is time for your test.
Find the strength to be patient after I have left.
Umm Farwah, your sacrifice Allah accepts.
Find the strength to be patient after I have left.

(Imām Ḥusayn ﷺ approaches the other entrance of the tent and calls out to Umm Rabāb, who comes to him when he calls.)

IMĀM ḤUSAYN ﷺ: Just leave the grave for a moment, Umm Rabāb.
Let us sit for a second to mourn our loss.
Our infant was denied water from Furāt,
But my mother now feeds him instead from Kawthar.
And she holds him close to her—finally, he'll rest.
Find the strength to be patient after I have left.
Umm Rabāb, your sacrifice Allah accepts.
Find the strength to be patient after I have left.

(Imām Ḥusayn ﷺ speaks to Imām Zaynul 'Ābidīn ﷺ.)

IMĀM ḤUSAYN ﷺ: O my son, let me give you my final will now.
To uphold the Imāmate, I know you will vow.
I know you will be patient when you are in Shām.
When the women are paraded, you must stand firm.
Now, my son, use these final moments just to rest.
You'll need strength to be patient after I have left.

O my son, Sajjād, you must prepare for your test—
To see the women attacked after I have left.

(Imām Ḥusayn ﷺ speaks to Sayyidah Zaynab.)

IMĀM ḤUSAYN ﷺ: And now, Zaynab, how do I begin my farewell?
You have been my only strength after ‘Abbās fell.
Just promise me when I die, I won’t hear you yell.
Don’t come out from the tent, sister, protect your veil.
How will you stand to witness when he’s on my chest?
Find the strength to be patient after I have left.
O my sister, your sacrifice Allah accepts.
Find the strength to be patient after I have left.

(Imām Ḥusayn ﷺ sits in front of Ruqayya.)

IMĀM ḤUSAYN ﷺ: Finally, let me sit with you, Ruqayya jān.
Come, sit in my lap—let me hold you one last time.
Listen to your aunt Zaynab, try not to cry.
I see how your heart is breaking saying goodbye.
But soon again, you will fall asleep on my chest.
Find the strength to be patient after I have left.
O my darling, your sacrifice Allah accepts.
Find the strength to be patient after I have left.

(Imām Ḥusayn ﷺ stands to leave the tent.)

IMĀM ḤUSAYN ﷺ: Now I leave you to fight until my final breath.
Find the strength to be patient after I have left.

(Recitation ends. Imām Ḥusayn ﷺ leaves the tent to go to his personal tent. Sayyidah Zaynab follows him, holding a ripped shirt in her hand.)

SAYYIDAH ZAYNAB: Brother, is there anything I can do to prepare you for the fight? I know ‘Abbās is not here to make preparations for you.

(Imām Ḥusayn ﷺ turns after entering his tent and sees Sayyidah Zaynab.)

IMĀM ḤUSAYN ﷺ: Zaynab, after the enemy kills me they will loot everything from my body.
(Sayyidah Zaynab begins crying) They will not leave anything behind. *(He holds up his hand.)* Not even this ring. My sister, do you have the amanah that our mother, Fāṭimah ﷺ, gave you?

(Sayyidah Zaynab holds up a harsh shirt.)

SAYYIDAH ZAYNAB: Yes I have it here. Before she died, our mother prepared me for this day. She told me you would need a shirt that the enemies would not take from you. And, brother—
(Sayyidah Zaynab pauses.) Brother, she told me to kiss your neck before you leave. She will be waiting for you—I must complete the will she gave me.

(Sayyidah Zaynab gives Imām Ḥusayn ﷺ the shirt and kisses his neck.)

SAYYIDAH ZAYNAB: When you see her, tell her that I will need her strength and patience. But most of all, tell her that since she left, we have faced atrocity after atrocity.

IMĀM ḤUSAYN ﷺ: I will deliver your message to her when we meet. I already see her strength in you. In every moment, you stand firm.

SAYYIDAH ZAYNAB: I need to hold on to that strength for a while longer. So when you leave, my brother, walk slowly. Let me drink in the sight of you on your horse, sitting strong, for just a few extra moments.

(The light goes out. The pained voice of Sayyidah Zaynab comes from off stage.)

SAYYIDAH ZAYNAB: Is there not a Muslim amongst you? O my grandfather Rasūlullāh! O my father ‘Alī! Your son lies on the plains of Karbalā’, thirsty and alone! Yabna Ummī, Yā Ḥusayn!

(The stage remains dark.)

NARRATOR: Innā lillāhi wa innā ilayhi rāji‘ūn. *(pause)* After our Imām ﷺ was martyred, the army of Yazīd moved swiftly. They committed unspeakable atrocities to the blessed body of our Imām ﷺ. They attacked the women and the children, looting and burning the tents. Each year we remember these atrocities and weep. Each year our cheeks are stained with tears for the grandson of the Prophet (ā). But we do not mourn alone. The heavens cry alongside us.

The angels weep over Abā ‘Abdillāh! Yā Ḥusayn! Yā ‘Aṭshān!

The Prophet of Allah ﷺ weeps over his grandson. Yā Ḥusayn!

Amīrul Mu’minīn ﷺ weeps over his son. Yā Ḥusayn!

Imām Ḥasan ﷺ weeps over his brother. Yā Ḥusayn!

Sayyidah Fāṭimah ﷺ mourns over her son. Yā Ḥusayn!

And each year Imām al-Hujjah ﷺ mourns the tragedy of his grandfather alongside them. His heart cannot bear to see the agony of Sayyidah Fāṭimah ﷺ.

(When the lights come back on Imām al-Mahdī عليه السلام is sitting on a rug in the center of the floor.)



(The following lines are recited to the tune of Di Thi Amma Ne by Mir Hasan Mir.)

IMĀM AL-MAHDĪ عليه السلام: O my grandmother my heart cannot find its peace,
I need to avenge your Ḥusayn, I'm begging you please

Each year I sit alone and mourn the tragedy
It's as if I see the companions fighting bravely
It's as if I can see Ḥusayn carry each body
And with each death my grandfather is brought to his knees
I need to avenge your Ḥusayn, I'm begging you please

O my grandmother the tears flow when I think of Qāsim
My heart stops when I remember how Ḥusayn ran to him
Only to find that his nephew had attained martyrdom
How did he open his 'abā to collect each piece
I need to avenge your Ḥusayn, I'm begging you please

When my mind turns towards 'Abbās my heart is shattered
With such ferocity he made his way to the river
And this lion of 'Alī refused to drink the water
But when I think of how he fell how can my heart find ease
I need to avenge your Ḥusayn, I'm begging you please

The youngest martyr of them all is one who breaks my heart
How did Rabāb bid her farewell when it was time to part
How did Ḥusayn dig that small grave in the dirt
How could they dare to lift his head on one of their spears
I need to avenge your Ḥusayn, I'm begging you please

I cry tears of blood when I think of how they killed your son
It's as if I can see Ḥusayn looking at Zaynab
As he hears the footsteps of Shimr coming closer
How can I hear of his death while I keep my sword sheathed
I need to avenge your Ḥusayn, I'm begging you please

And every year I watch as your Shī'ah gather to mourn
I sit in the majālis and see how their hearts burn
I hear the cries of 'wāwaylā' and I want to return
But my dhuḥur will only come when Allah decrees
I need to avenge your Ḥusayn, I'm begging you please

(Imām al-Mahdī stands and faces the audience.)

O lovers of my grandfather know that I pray for you
And when you cry for the Imām I cry with you too
How much these tears soothe Fāṭimah, if only you knew,
So keep this fire in your heart until we meet
Together we'll avenge Ḥusayn, his mission we'll complete.
Together we'll avenge Ḥusayn, his mission we'll complete.

(Recitation ends. Lights fade out. Lights come back up as the entire cast returns to the stage. They bow as they recite the following:

يَا رَبَّ الْحُسَيْنِ، بِحَقِّ الْحُسَيْنِ، اشْفِ صَدْرَ الْحُسَيْنِ بِظُهُورِ الْحُجَّةِ

Yā Rabbal-Ḥusayn, bi-ḥaqqil-Ḥusayn, ishfi ṣadra al-Ḥusayn bi-ẓuhūr al-Ḥujjah.

*O Lord of Ḥusayn, by the right of Ḥusayn, heal the heart of Ḥusayn
through the reappearance of the Ḥujjah.*

And then recite Du'ā' al-Faraj, encourage audience to participate as well. The final curtain falls.)

A Theatrical Reflection on the Stand of Truth

From Medina to Karbala retraces the courageous path of Imām Ḥusayn ؑ in the face of tyranny. This unique production begins with the death of Mu‘āwiyah and unfolds the events that led to one of the most profound moments in Islamic history—the Day of ‘Āshūrā’.

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